

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Kiwanis Activities, Inc.

Application ID: 14AC155995

Program Name: Alternative Classroom Experience/Summer Incentive Program

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

Strengths:

All statistics listed in the narrative are cited using recent and relevant sources.

The applicant provides multiple sources to demonstrate that the need is prevalent and severe in their community.

The applicant lists specific and relevant data to document the need for the program. An example of this is their reference to the 2103 Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Plan for each school.

The target county contains 30 schools with 40% or more students not proficient in literacy and math.

Free and reduced lunch rates and unemployment rates are used to demonstrate poverty levels.

Targeted schools have classifications of Priority, Focus, or Needs Improvement.

Poor performance in reading and math is documented through Benchmark scores, IOWA scores (national comparison), and Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Plans.

The data documenting poor performance are recent (2012-2013).

Self-report ratings for 6th graders in Pulaski County indicate higher rates of risky behavior than state averages.

The applicant states that in the targeted schools, 40% or more of the students are not proficient in literacy and math on the Benchmark, and the National Ranking of both districts on the IOWA in reading and math are below the 50th percentile ranking.

The applicant states that of the 71 schools in the target area, 11 are priority schools, 13 are focus schools and 44

schools are “needs improvement” schools.

The applicant states that it will use stronger recruitment efforts in the needs improvement schools.

The applicant cites statistics from Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment, which gives data on 6th graders in the county citing behavior risk factors—such as interaction with anti-social peers, perceived risk of drug use, early initiation of anti-social behavior, and suspension from school.

The applicant states the rate of students qualifying for free school lunch as 54-56% in the target county, thus successfully demonstrating the low-income of the families with children enrolled in neighborhood schools.

The applicant states that 30 of 71 schools in the target county have 2012-2013 Benchmark and IOWA test scores that indicate a lack of proficiency in literacy and math.

The applicant has a multi-faceted approach to ensure academic success for the participating students.

There is a one to eight adult/student ratio for the academic instruction aspect of the program.

The applicant initiates an Insisted Success component of their academic program. All students must score at least 80% on all academic work.

The inputs, activities, and outputs align with the short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes across all components of the program.

The program appears to be a comprehensive, intensive approach to solving academic and behavioral issues.

AmeriCorps members communicate with a variety of stakeholders: parents, teachers, and students.

Pre-test/posttest data evaluated academic and behavioral progress. Parental involvement also is assessed.

Standardized assessment tools were used to measure academic progress.

Short-term and long-term follow-up by AmeriCorps members is available for campers.

The intervention goes beyond a one-shot approach. Campers can become Counselors in Training, who can then become future AmeriCorps members.

The applicant states that the AmeriCorps members receive over 100 hours of intensive training at the beginning of their term including training in academic instruction techniques, such as Reciprocal Teaching, Reality therapy discipline model, nonviolent crisis intervention, standard 1st aid and CPR, emergency procedures, service-learning curricula, outdoor living skills, environmental awareness, civic responsibility, conflict resolution, parent conference strategies, and other techniques necessary to be successful in fulfilling responsibilities.

The training AmeriCorps members receive appears adequate to fulfill their responsibilities for the one-on-one small

group tutoring in reading and math, parent meetings, and other assignments.

The applicant has met and exceeded all of their performance measure targets for all outcomes and outputs.

Eight-five percent of students tutored within the program exhibited the equivalent of five months of academic growth in just five weeks.

There have been no compliance issues or areas of weakness or risk identified during the last year of program operation.

The applicant has provided summer residential camp program since 1929. This particular program (ACE) began in 1988.

The applicant is accredited through the American Camp Association, which requires stringent standards of practice.

The applicant has administered two federal grants and currently operates two federal programs through the Arkansas Department of Education.

The applicant states that all performance measures for all outcomes and outputs were met or exceeded.

An 85% improvement rate was attained for academic and behavioral goals.

An 85% rate of improvement was translated into a 5-month growth in reading, spelling, and/or math in 5 weeks.

The applicant has consistently exceeded its performance measure targets for all outcomes and outputs for the last three years, attaining an 85% improvement of .5 grade level in reading, spelling, and/or math.

The applicant states that 85% of students participating in the program “behaved appropriately” upon return to their regular classrooms.

The applicant also demonstrated an 83% retention rate for students in the program.

Weaknesses:

The applicant that “other county statistics” point to factors that frequently lead to low academics. However, the applicant does not provide any information as to what those statistics are.

Data from the Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment were cited for Pulaski County, but not for the Little Rock school district.

Although quasi-experimental studies are cited, the data do not include findings of significant differences between Alternative Classroom Experience (ACE) participants and control participants.

The 2004 study of this program cited by the applicant is described as “including a quasi-experimental component”

but lacks details of the number of study participants or numeration of the results.

None of the studies cited by the applicant had any measurable results or measurable community impact described.

The applicant states that the program has “met or exceeded all performance targets for all outcomes and outputs” for the last three years without describing any details or enumerating the results. The example of 85% of students improving in reading, spelling and/or math gives no clarity as to how much improvement was obtained or how the improvement was determined.